

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5411

As of February 2, 2017

Title: An act relating to consumer protection in eye care.

Brief Description: Concerning eye care.

Sponsors: Senators Cleveland, Rivers, Warnick, Conway and Keiser.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health Care: 2/02/17.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes requirements for the use of remote technology for eye care, and provides for penalties.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE

Staff: Mich'l Needham (786-7442)

Background: A number of online services allow consumers to order glasses and contacts through web-based services. Some services also advertise online eye exams to issue a prescription for corrective eyewear. The online services indicate they use licensed ophthalmologists to evaluate visual acuity, diagnose refractive error, and issue a prescription, where clinically appropriate.

An eye care provider must be a licensed ophthalmologist or optometrist under state law to prescribe corrective lenses. A licensed ophthalmologist, licensed optometrist, or a licensed optician may dispense prescribed corrective lenses.

Summary of Bill: It is unlawful for any person in this state to:

- write or otherwise prepare a prescription for corrective lenses without the individual first having received a comprehensive eye examination and refraction from a qualified vision care provider writing the prescription;
- dispense corrective lenses to a patient without a valid prescription from a qualified vision care provider; or

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- sell any corrective lenses, other than over-the-counter glasses, to any individual in the state unless the individual has a valid prescription from a qualified vision care provider and the person selling the lenses is properly licensed to dispense corrective lenses.

It is unlawful for any person to offer remote technology to consumers without fully complying with the following:

- the remote technology must be approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration for the intended use;
- the remote technology must be designed and operated in a manner that provides any accommodation required by the Federal Americans With Disabilities Act;
- the remote technology must gather and transmit any protected health information in compliance with the Federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act;
- the remote technology may only transmit the diagnostic information and data to a qualified vision care provider;
- the remote technology must display the physical location of the service, and the name and state license number of the individual who will read and interpret the diagnostic information and data;
- if the remote technology is used as the basis for a qualified vision care provider to write a prescription or perform any other service or procedure, the service or procedure must have a recognized current procedural terminology code; and
- the owner or operator of the remote technology must maintain liability insurance to cover claims made by individuals diagnosed or treated based on information and data generated by the automated equipment.

The Department of Health (Department) must review any written complaint alleging a violation of the act. The Department must investigate if it believes there has been a violation, whether or not any person has been harmed by the suspected violation. If the Department finds there has been a violation, it may impose a civil penalty of between \$1,000 and \$10,000 for each violation. If the violation is the first violation and there was not significant harm to human health, the Department may issue a warning instead.

At the request of the Department, the Attorney General may file a civil action seeking an injunction or other appropriate relief to enforce this act.

Qualified vision care provider means an ophthalmologist or optometrist licensed in Washington. Remote technology means any automated equipment or testing device to be used with a phone, computer, or internet-based device that can generate data without the physical presence of a qualified vision care provider.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The quality of eye care is important and it is unclear how we can ensure the quality of online eye care. We have been working on some amendments with the Department of Health to clarify that the provider must be licensed in the state but not reside in the state. We support telemedicine but believe care provided through technology and in person should be held to the same standard of care. It is not appropriate to get an initial prescription for contact lenses online since they cannot be properly fitted and there is not a thorough exam. An in-person exam involves a more thorough exam and a review of systemic issues. The refraction alone is not a comprehensive exam.

CON: We have had no complaints about our business and no lawsuits. This bill is in search of a problem. Technology does increase access to care and the technology is advancing rapidly with new innovations. We should trust licensed providers to make appropriate use of technology and innovation. This bill is the opposite of a free market approach and just protects retail establishments. Technology is more convenient for many than taking time off work to visit a provider in-person. There is an existing CPT code for the refractions. Many regulations on this business already exist at the federal level. We have no claims of harm and the National Academy of Ophthalmologists is not opposed to the use of technology. This option allows consumers the option of purchasing new lenses between exams. I provide eye care for the neonatal intensive care unit (NICUs) and there are not enough rural providers to ensure infants get the necessary screening in-person. We need to retain access to care with technology. The eye surgeons are not in agreement on this bill. We are working to see if we can find an agreement but there is a long way to go. We offer designer eyewear directly to the consumers for significant reductions in cost. Telemedicine can transform our industry but this bill slaps down technology and closes off options for consumers.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Annette Cleveland, Prime Sponsor; Bill Hinkle, Optometric Physicians of WA; Linda Madeski, Optometric Physicians of WA; Mark Maramen, citizen.

CON: James Stroh, WA Academy of Eye Physicians and Surgeons; David Epley, WA Academy of Eye Physicians and Surgeons; Susie Tracy, WA Academy of Eye Physicians and Surgeons; Brent Ludeman, 1-800-Contacts; Chase Everton, 1-800-Contacts; Pete Horkan, Opternative; Adam Greenberg, Warby Parker.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.